

RE: IP Relay Fraud  
Docket No 03-123

dkelley17@msn.com wrote on 5/31/2006 3:03:05 PM :

I went to SOS Staffing in South Jordan, Utah recently to look for employment. I have good typing skills so they told me about a job opportunity with Sorenson IP Relay Offices. I did the drug test for them and started training. As you know, the company's work has to do with providing assistance for hearing impaired people to communicate with other parties via telephone via an internet connection. On the surface it looks like a great service, and I am sure that that is what they intended, but there is a major problem with what is actually happening, with Sorenson and with the other companies that provide this service.

The form that they have you sign at the first part of training, before you are actually training with an operator, that you will not divulge any communications with anyone outside of the company seems reasonable since the hearing impaired are communicating things that should not be shared. But it also protects the company and all of the fraudulent callers that are using the service, mostly calls coming from Ghana, and I understand Nigeria is starting to catch on to this opportunity.

Because this service is taxpayer funded through the Americans with Disabilities Act, taxpayers are funding these bogus calls. But beyond that most of these calls are being placed to American businesses where they use either stolen or manufactured credit card numbers to buy laptop computers, tires, jewelry, glass (most of which gets broken in transit, but as my trainer explained it, there will be one or two pieces in the middle that make it through the shipping process). Many of these attempts fail, but many of them are successful. They have contacts here in the U.S. who they sometimes use to pick up the merchandise to ship. The shipping is also paid for with bogus credit. My trainer had a list of items that they often are trying to purchase that was two full columns of 8-1/2 x 11 lined notebook paper. She was still adding to it.

There are strict rules laid down by the FCC about the calls and they try to be careful to obey those. One of them is that the caller must be given the opportunity at the end of a call to place another call. These bogus callers used to tie up a relay operator for hours, till the company decided to start a list of known frauds that could be checked against. The caller has an identifying name that comes up on the screen. You can copy that name and place it in another box on the screen and it checks the list. But all they have to do is then come up with another name, sometimes only changing it a little. Then

they allow them one call if they are very suspicious, until they say something that is on the list they have generated that they accept as proof that it is a bogus call. You don't learn that list of proofs until the second week of training, called nesting, but one of the things is if Ghana is mentioned. I trained three days and then quit.

If they know the call is Bogus they type in and an automatic message appears on the screen telling the caller that they do not accept international calls, and cuts them off.

That there are more companies competing for business, and because they are paid by the call, are two reasons I believe Sorenson is reticent to correct the situation. I suggested to my trainer that hearing impaired people could be given an identifying password or something like that, but I was told that they were concerned that that might scare some of the hearing impaired people away from wanting to use the system.

I have been told that often 80 percent of their calls in a day are these bogus calls. I was told by my trainer when I went in to quit that that is why they lose most of the people who quit.

It just seems to me that because the program is funded by the government, it can be fixed by the government through some simple legislated changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Thank you for considering this problem. I would appreciate a response.

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